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ABSTRACT

In accordance with the Basic Skills Assessment Program (BSAP, Act 631), all local school districts of South Carolina are responsible for providing instruction in the basic skills of mathematics, reading and writing to students that demonstrate deficiencies in one or more of these tests. The BSAP represents a comprehensive approach toward improvement of basic skills of individual students and effectiveness of instructional programs. The central thrust of BSAP is instructional improvement, with heavy focus on grades K-3 and establishment of statewide educational objectives of basic skills for grades K-12; and requires readiness testing at the beginning of grade 1; criterion referenced testing at the ends of grades 1, 2, 3, 6, and 8; and adult functional competency testing at the end of grade 11. The responsibility for implementing the act was delegated to various levels of school government. Many issues and concerns have been raised since the passage of the act, that necessitate further information on interpreting BSAP. Part I of this handbook, "Major Provisions of the Basic Skills Assessment Program Legislation" addresses major elements of the legislation. Part II of the handbook, "Local School District Questions and Answers" provides the answers to questions posed by local school district personnel. (Author/KM)

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A HANDBOOK FOR UNDERSTANDING THE BASIC SKILLS ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

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A HANDBOOK FOR UNDERSTANDING THE BASIC SKILLS ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

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A HANDBOOK FOR UNDERSTANDING THE BASIC SKILLS ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

Introduction

On August 2, 1978, Governor James B. Edwards signed into law an act that, in effect, posited the acquisition of minimum performance standards by South Carolina's public school population as a priority for the State's public schools. The Basic Skills Assessment Program (BSAP) Act, (Act 631), hereafter referred to as the Act, charged local school districts with the responsibility of providing instruction in the basic skills of Mathematics and in the communication skills of Reading and Writing [Section 1(a)] to those students that demonstrate deficiencies in one or more of these areas.

Competency or basic skills legislation has been viewed by many as an attempt by various state legislatures to do something about declining test scores and incompetent high school graduates. Unfortunately, publicity surrounding these laws has focused attention on the testing phase of education and not on the instructional process itself. Testing or evaluation represents only one component of the educational process; and testing alone can do little to improve the skills of individual students or, for that matter, to improve instructional programs. The South Carolina Act benefited from the 36 other states' acts that preceded it. Unlike the other acts, the South Carolina Act represents a comprehentive approach toward the improvement of the basic skills of individual students and the effectiveness of instructional programs. This legislation is unique from the legislation of other states in that the central thrust of the Act is that of instructional improvement. What distinguishes the South Carolina legislation from the legislation of other states is that the South Carolina Act focuses heavily on the primary grades, Grades K-3. This emphasizes the importance of these early developmental years instead of the high school years. The South Carolina Act begins with the establishment of statewide educational objectives in Reading, Writing, and

Mathematics for Grades K-12, requires readiness testing at the beginning of Grade 1; criterion-referenced testing at the end of Grades 1, 2, 3, 6, and 8; and adult-functional competency testing at the end of Grade 11. These tests are designed to detect and to alleviate student deficiencies through instructional improvement. The implementation schedule for the Act spans a 10-year phase-in period. Therefore, the Act allows time to examine all components of the educational process without imposing graduation or promotion requirements implicit in most of the previous competency legislation.

The responsibility for implementing the Act was delegated to the State Board of Education, the State Department of Education, local school boards, and local school districts. For the most part, the Act is quite clear in delineating these responsibilities. However, since the passage of the Act, many issues or concerns have been raised that necessitate additional information that will facilitate the interpretation of the Act. Therefore, the purpose of this Handbook is to provide local school districts with this type of information.

Part I of the Handbook, "Major Provisions of the Basic Skills Assessment Program Legislation" addresses the major elements of the legislation. Included in the discussion of each of the major provisions is an explanation of its components and the procedures used or planned for implementation.

Part II of the Handbook, "Local School District Questions and Answers" addresses the answers to questions posed by local school district personnel. For simplicity, the questions are presented in the same order as they are sequenced in the Act. Therefore, the questions and their discussions begin with Section 1 of the Act and conclude with Section 9. Additionally, only those sections of the Act that have caused particular concern for districts have been included in Part II.

The Educational Assessment Section, Office of Research, express our sincere gratitude to the following school dis-

tricts for their input into this Handbook: Aiken, Charleston, Clarendon District 2, Darlington, Greenville, Oconee, Rock Hill District 3, and Greenwood District 51.

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PART I

MAJOR PROVISIONS OF THE BASIC SKILLS ASSESSMENT PROGRAM LEGISLATION

The purpose of Part I of the Handbook is to provide an overview of the major provisions of the Basic Skills Assessment Program Act. Included in the overview of each major provision is a discussion of its components and a description of the procedures used or planned to implement the major provision of the Act. Specifically, the major provisions of the Act and those discussed in this part of the Handbook include the establishment of Educational Objectives, Grades K-12; the selection, field-testing, and statewide administration of a readiness test for the beginning of Grade 1 and the provision of appropriate developmental activities in Grade 1; the development or selection, field-testing, and statewide administration of criterion-referenced tests for the end of Grades 1, 2, 3, 6, and 8 and the provision of instruction to remedy deficiencies; the development or selection, field-testing, and statewide administration of an adult functional competency test for the end of Grade 11; the field-testing of instructional programs; and the creation of a Basic Skills Advisory Commission.

Establishment of Educational Objectives - Grades K-12

Section 1(a) provides that the State Board of Education, through the State Department of Education, "Establish statewide educational objectives in the basic skills..." of Reading, Writing, and Mathematics in Grades K-12. The purpose of these objectives is to serve as a guide for curriculum planning and test development. Quite simply, clearly delineated objectives mean that teachers and testers "operate from the same sheet of music". In this way, the measurement aspect of the educational process assesses what is actually taught in schools, what needs to be taught, and what needs to be retaught.

The time table of activities in Section 4 of the Act specifies that the identification of educational objectives

in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics was to occur during the time period from August 2, 1978, to June 30, 1979.

Prior to initiating the objectives identification task, Department staff met to develop the guidelines that would serve as the basis for the establishment of the educational objectives. The "Guidelines for Identification of Objectives, Grades K-12", that were established were adopted by the State Board of Education on October 18, 1978.

The objectives were to serve the following four purposes:

1. to serve as a guide for the "basic skills" curriculum,
2. to serve as a means for measurement;
3. to assist in instructional diagnosis; and
4. to serve as a means for communicating to the public.

The guidelines also outlined seven criteria or characteristics for the development of the objectives; namely, the objectives should:

1. represent basic skills;
2. be limited to school-based learning and applications of school-based learning;
3. be cognitive in nature;
4. represent the outcomes of learning;
5. represent a continuum of skill development across grade levels with some grade level overlap;
6. include all levels of difficulty; and
7. be measurable in some way, either by pencil and paper tests or teacher observations.

In addition to the guidelines that relate to the purposes of the objectives and the kinds of objectives to be developed, guidelines for determining existing objectives resources, possible objectives identification strategies, and local involvement in the process were also established.

In general, a strategy involving maximal use of locally-developed objectives and local expertise was used to identify 18 Kindergarten Objectives and 16 Grades 1-12 Ob-

jectives during the 1978-79 school year. The 16 Grades 1-12 objectives consist of six Reading Objectives, five Writing Objectives, and five Mathematics Objectives. Specific information relative to the procedures utilized and the individuals involved in the objectives identification process may be found in the publication, State Objectives, Reading, Writing, and Mathematics, Grades K-12, prepared by the Educational Assessment Section of the Office of Research.

The rationale behind global broad-scoped objectives was that (1) teachers would have a manageable number of meaningful instructional targets rather than unlimited sets of objectives and (2) districts would be able to merge locally developed curricula more easily within a broad framework than within a highly specific framework.

Sufficient copies of the objectives for all Grades K-8 teachers and high school Language Arts and Mathematics teachers were distributed to the school principals in October, 1979. Additional copies of the objectives may be obtained by contacting the Educational Assessment Section, Office of Research, State Department of Education.

Prior to the 1979-80 school year, districts were responsible for (1) adopting appropriate policies to insure that a continuous assessment is made of an individual's progress in relation to the statewide minimum standards of student achievement for Grades K-12 and (2) providing appropriate in-service training for all certified personnel implementing the basic skills assessment program to insure efficient and effective methods of instruction.

Readiness Test - Grade 1

Simultaneous with the establishment of the educational objectives, the selection and field-testing of a readiness test was required.

The purpose of the readiness testing, by law, is "to measure a student's readiness to begin the formal school curriculum" [Section 1(b)(1)]. There is no latitude as to when this

testing is to take place. The Act clearly states that the administration of the readiness test is to be at the beginning of the school year in Grade 1 [Section 1(2)]. Additionally, the results of the readiness test are to be used for providing appropriate developmental activities to those first graders who are "not ready" to begin the formal first grade curriculum.

A Kindergarten Committee was selected to assist the Department in the identification of the Kindergarten Objectives, the selection of the readiness test, and the setting of the readiness standard based on the results of a field-testing of the readiness test. This committee was primarily comprised of persons with expertise in the area of early childhood education. Committee members were selected on the basis of recommendations from district superintendents and State Department of Education personnel. Special care was taken to insure that minority groups were represented and that the Committee included representation from the following groups: district-level personnel, first grade teachers, kindergarten teachers, administrators, college and university professors, and testing specialists.

The Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery, CSAB, an individually administered test, was selected by the committee as the test most representative of the Kindergarten Objectives. Following the selection of the CSAB, the CSAB was field-tested using a sample of kindergarten students in 75 schools in 33 school districts. Based upon teacher judgments and student data from the field-test, a readiness cut-off score was established. Contrary to some comments concerning the first grade readiness test, this cut-off score was not just pulled out of the air. A detailed explanation of the CSAB adoption and cut-off procedures are provided in Ready or Not: A Report on the 1979 Statewide Readiness Test Administration and Results, prepared by the Educational Assessment Section of the Office of Research.

The readiness test was administered statewide in Fall, 1979, and in Fall, 1980. Based upon the student scores on the statewide administration, districts are responsible for (1) advising (in writing), parents of a student not

indicating readiness for first grade work to secure a complete physical examination for that child, (2) advising parents of the availability of local governmental health services, and (3) providing appropriate developmental activities for these students in the first grade.

Criterion-Referenced Tests - Grades 1, 2, 3, 6, and 8

In addition to the statewide administration of the readiness test during the 1979-80 school year, the Department was charged with the development or selection of end-of-year achievement tests in Reading and Mathematics for Grades 1, 2, and 3. Concurrently, tests were to be developed or selected for Grades 6 and 8 that would measure student achievement in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics. The legislation specified that the tests would be criterion-referenced and have as their purpose the "diagnosis of student deficiencies and ... aid in determining instruction needed by the student in achieving the minimum statewide standard established for each respective grade".

Rather than select "shelf tests" for Grades 1, 2, 3, 6, and 8, the Department decided to develop the end-of-year criterion-referenced tests. The decision to develop the tests was guided by the fact that a criterion was to be set for each of these grades, thus, making instructional validity of the tests the crucial consideration. Additionally, the development of the tests ensured that the test items would measure South Carolina's educational objectives. Thus, by strict design, what is taught is what is measured.

Since the basic skills legislation requires that the Department maintain security on all basic skills tests as specified in Section 1(i) of Act 631, the Department decided to develop and field-test pools of test items for each basic skills objective rather than develop and field-test a single test. The development of pools of test items for each Reading, Writing, and Mathematics objective would permit the creation of several alternate tests of equivalent difficulty. This procedure permits the use of different tests each year, and, consequently, reduces any problems

associated with the possible loss of security on any one of the tests.

Given the magnitude of the work involved in the test development effort, the Department decided to develop a Request for Proposals (RFP) to acquire assistance from a test development contractor. Via the competitive bidding process, Instructional Objectives Exchange (IOX), the contractor that had assisted the Department in the identification of the Grades 1-12 Objectives, was selected as the test development contractor.

The first step in the test development process was the creation of a "Framework" for the Development of the Grades 1, 2, 3, 6, and 8 test items. The "Framework" was developed by IOX and submitted to the Department for approval. The "Framework" addressed the manner in which various issues such as cultural bias and reading level were to be dealt with during the test development process.

Upon approval of the "Framework" by the Department, IOX began developing the preliminary test item specifications or blueprints from which the test items would be created. The preliminary test item specifications were based on the previously identified Basic Skills Reading, Writing, and Mathematics Objectives within the constraints imposed by the "Framework". Basically, the specifications clearly defined the content that was appropriate for inclusion on the test and such things as the appropriate reading level, the skills and subskills to be assessed, the maximum length of reading passages, and acceptable item types.

Once completed, the preliminary test item specifications were submitted to Department staff and the Basic Skills Reading, Writing, and Mathematics Committees, composed of South Carolina educators, for review and revision. Department staff and the Basic Skills Committees reviewed and revised the preliminary test item specifications in October of 1979.

One major change occurred during the committee reviews. The Writing Committee decided that the writing tests for Grades

6 and 8 should consist of student generated writing samples. Thus, writing prompts rather than multiple-choice test items were developed for the assessment of writing skills.

Based upon Department and committee input, the preliminary test item specifications were revised; and the preliminary test items for the five grades were developed. These preliminary test items were submitted to Department staff and the Basic Skills Reading, Writing, and Mathematics Committees for review and revision in March of 1980. Based upon the input of these two groups, the test items were finalized and field-tested on a representative sample of South Carolina students. The field-test sample consisted of students located in 38 schools in 24 districts across the State. The field-test served to identify faulty test items and to provide indices of item difficulty. The data from the field test were analyzed and reviewed by Department staff and the Basic Skills Committees for the purpose of eliminating and revising faulty items and constructing alternate forms of the various tests.

The first statewide administration of the Grades 1, 2, 3, 6, and 8 criterion-referenced tests in Reading and Mathematics is currently scheduled for the week of May 4-8, 1981. The Writing tests for Grades 6 and 8 will probably be administered in mid-April, 1981.

Following the first statewide administration of the criterion-referenced tests, minimum standards of achievement will be established for each skill area at each grade level. The Department is investigating various cut-off methods for the criterion-referenced tests in Grades 1, 2, 3, 6, and 8. The method used for the readiness cut-off score, teacher judgments in combination with student data from the statewide administration, is one method that is being considered.

The cut-off score is viewed in the context of the legislation as representing a decision point below which the student demonstrates a deficiency in Reading, Writing, or Mathematics. A student's score on the appropriate end-of-year achievement test provides the instructional planner with one piece of evidence for additional instruction that must be planned for and provided to that student.

While the Act directs attention to the identification of student deficiencies, one must not overlook the positive information provided by a student's test score(s). That is, the same test that provides clues to student deficiencies also illuminates student strengths, an important aspect for instructional planning.

Once the cut-off scores are established, districts will be responsible for providing (in writing), test information and explanations of deficiencies to a parent or guardian of a dependent child found to have deficiencies and make suggestions for appropriate assistance to be given to the child by the dependent child's parent or guardian. Districts will also be responsible for the continuous assessment of student progress, the use of the test results to help in the diagnosis of student deficiencies, and instruction to aid the student in bringing his performance up to the statewide minimum standards in all areas of deficiencies.

Adult Functional Competency Test - Grade 11

Section 1(e) requires the development or selection and field-testing of a minimum achievement test that will measure adult functional competency at the end of Grade 11.

Since the Act does not define adult functional competency, a review of existing definitions of adult functional competency was conducted by the Educational Assessment Section, Office of Research, and the Basic Skills Advisory Commission. After intensive review, the Basic Skills Advisory Commission defined the adult functional competency test as an eleventh grade test that shall test the school skills of Reading, Writing, and Mathematics -- the foundation of post-school learning -- as identified in the basic skills objectives. Additionally, the commission specified that, when the State Department developed the Grade 11 test, the format of some test items should require the application of school skills to real life experiences.

With the definition of adult functional competency intact, development of the Grade 11 test was initiated; and field-testing is planned for the week of May 4-8, 1981. Although the Grade 11 test will be somewhat different from the tests for Grades 1, 2, 3, 6, and 8, the test development process will be identical to that which was used for the lower grades. That process will include the following steps: the development of a "Framework", the development of test item specifications, the development of test items, field-testing, item review and revision, and statewide administration of the test.

Field-Testing of Instructional Programs - Grades 1, 2, 3, 6, and 8

Section 1(n) of the Act requires the selection or development and field-testing of basic instructional programs during the School Years 1980-81 through 1984-85 in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics in at least five representative school districts that are designed to raise student performance up to statewide standards. Thus, the Act requires that the Department field-test instructional programs designed to meet the needs of students who are defined as "not ready" at the beginning of Grade 1 and those students who do not meet the minimum standards that are set for the ends of Grades 1, 2, 3, 6, and 8. Under the provisions of the legislated implementation time line, the 1980-81 field-testing of instructional programs is restricted to developmental programs to meet the needs of students who are identified as "not ready" on the Grade 1 readiness test.

Utilizing Title IV funds, a total of six school districts are involved in field-testing three developmental programs during 1980-81. Each of the programs is being field-tested in two school districts.

The field-testing of instructional programs at Grades 1, 2, 3, 6, and 8 will occur once those testing programs are intact.

Basic Skills Advisory Commission

Section 1A of the Act established the South Carolina Basic Skills Advisory Commission and charged the Commission with the responsibility for providing recommendations and advice to the Governor, General Assembly, and the State Board of Education on the implementation of the Basic Skills Assessment Program. The Basic Skills Advisory Commission was increased in membership from a 15-member Commission established by the Act to a 25-member Commission as a function of Section 33 of Part 2 of the 1979-80 General Appropriations Act. The original 15-member Commission was actively involved in the first year implementation process of identifying objectives and selecting, field-testing, and revising the readiness test. In addition to their regular meetings the first year, Commission members participated in public meetings which were conducted for the purpose of reviewing the proposed objectives. The 25-member Commission was actively involved in the second year implementation processes of the readiness testing and the development, field-testing, and revision of the criterion-referenced tests for the end of Grades 1, 2, 3, 6, and 8. In addition to their regular meetings, Commission members participated in several review processes and workshops conducted by the Department.

PART II

LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The questions in this section are those submitted by local school districts in response to a letter sent to all district superintendents requesting their concerns about the BSAP legislation. Responses to these questions were prepared by the Offices of Federal Programs, General Education, and Research. One must bear in mind, however, that the BSAP implementation is still in its early stages; thus, the interpretations included in this handbook were based on the best possible information available at the time.

Questions Related to Section 1

Section 1. The State Board of Education, through the State Department of Education, shall:

Section 1(a) Establish statewide educational objectives in the basic skills with minimum standards of student achievement for kindergarten through grade twelve. The term "basic skills" shall include mathematics and the communications skills of reading and writing. The minimum standards shall be designed to reflect the level of skill mastery, as determined by the State Board of Education, each student is expected to have attained at the various grades in kindergarten through grade twelve.

Question: What measures would be recommended to help local districts prevent the minimal state objectives from becoming the entire focus of instruction for many classroom teachers?

Answer: In adopting the statewide objectives, careful consideration was given TO AVOID presenting the idea that the objectives would define a minimum program. Although

the objectives adopted for Reading, Writing, and Mathematics, Grades K-12, in the Basic Skills Assessment Program represent a range of skill difficulty, the objectives cannot be considered adequate for a complete program in Language Arts or Mathematics. Rather, the objectives identify a subset of skills that need to be taught at the various grade levels. If these objectives should become the entire focus of instruction in any school district, the BSAP test results could conceivably improve each year; however, the quality of education could decline in that school district.

Avoiding the error of the basic skills objectives becoming the total objectives must be a goal at every educational level level -- the school, district, and State. Monitoring school and district scores on the CTBS/S, the norm-referenced test administered in the Statewide Testing Program and in some district testing programs, is one way to determine that appropriate attention is given to a total curriculum. Proper utilization of district guides could also help. For districts or schools that have curriculum guides already in place, the task is to determine that all BSAP objectives are included in or added to the guide. Districts currently developing or planning to develop guides might find the BSAP objectives a profitable starting point for constructing the objectives of the total program. Maximizing the involvement of teachers in the development of curriculum guides and providing strong administrative leadership will maximize the effective implementation of the guides. Districts that operate without a guide must de-

termine their own methods for assuring that the BSAP objectives receive appropriate attention. Whatever the situation, principals as instructional leaders must accept the responsibility of ensuring that teachers provide a wide range of instructional activities for all students.

Section 1(b)(1) Establish a state basic skills assessment program that shall include the administration to all public school students at the beginning of grade one a readiness test that will be designed to measure a student's readiness to begin the formal school curriculum. The results of the readiness test shall be used to provide appropriate developmental activities in the first grade.

Question: Define or explain the meaning of appropriate developmental activities in the first grade.

Answer: "Appropriate developmental activities" are activities selected on the premise that every child does not develop at the same rate. These activities should provide the child with experiences designed to assure instructional growth at a suitable pace. With respect to the BSAP, "appropriate" also implies that the activities provided in Grade 1 relate specifically to those readiness skills on which students have measured deficiencies. Any student found to be "not ready" should receive assistance in overcoming the weaknesses indicated by the test results.

Special care should be taken to insure that readiness activities are provided as long as a child needs them but that no child is locked into an instructional sequence because the child has initial deficiencies.

Question: Are instructional groupings permitted in first grade placement?

Answer: Section 1(b)(1) requires that "the results of the readiness test shall be used to provide appropriate developmental activities in the first grade". The Act does not encourage instructional groupings by class nor the labeling of students by the student's test status. Based on the student's readiness test score, the district is responsible for providing appropriate developmental activities within a heterogeneous classroom.

Section 1(c)(1) As part of the basic skills assessment program, develop or select criterion-referenced tests that can measure student achievement in reading and mathematics in grades one, two and three against the standard established for each of those respective grades.

Section 1(c)(2) Cause to be administered the tests provided for herein to all public school students at the end of grades one, two and three. The purpose of the tests shall be that of diagnosis of student deficiencies and that of an aid in determining instruction needed by the student in achieving the minimum statewide standard established for each respective grade.

Section 1(d)(1) As part of the basic skills assessment program, develop or select criterion-referenced tests that can measure student achievement in reading, writing, and mathematics in grades six and eight against the standard established for each of those respective grades.

Section 1(d)(2) Cause to be administered the test provided for grade six to all public school students at the end of grade six and shall cause to be administered the test provided for grade eight to all public school students at the end of grade eight. The purpose of the tests shall be that of diagnosis of student deficiencies and that of an aid in determining instruction needed by the student in achieving the minimum statewide standard established for each respective grade.

Question: What are the differences between criterion-referenced and norm-referenced tests and their uses in "lay" terms?

Answer: In appearance, a criterion-referenced test may be no different than a norm-referenced test. Both may be short-answer, multiple-choice, essay, or any combination of the three and measure similar skills. In fact, a criterion-referenced test may well be used as a norm-referenced test; but the reversal is not necessarily true. Appearance, then, is not a major distinction between the two types of tests.

The names norm-referenced and criterion-referenced indicate the primary distinction. Norm refers to the use of a comparison group to which an individual student or group of students is compared, and a relative standing is computed (e.g., national percentile). Criterion, on the other hand, refers to "a standard on which a judgment or decision may be based." A student's performance is compared to a criterion score, not for the purpose of

comparison to other students but for the purpose of determining whether or not that individual student's achievement equals, surpasses, or falls below a minimum acceptable standard or criterion of performance. The Act states that each student's performance is to be measured against a minimum standard established for each grade level.

As stated previously, the Basic Skills Act allowed the Department the option of either selecting or developing the readiness and end-of-year achievement tests. In the case of the end-of-year tests in Grades 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, and 11, the Department's decision was to develop new tests rather than to select "shelf tests". Why? Since a criterion was to be set, the instructional validity of the tests was crucial. Therefore, the South Carolina State Objectives which were derived from locally-developed curriculum guides were used as the basis for test development. By basing instruction and the test development on the Statewide Educational Objectives, what is being taught is what is being measured by the South Carolina Basic Skills Tests. A norm-referenced test such as the CTBS/S reflects a representative national sample of curricular objectives and may well measure content not covered in a South Carolina classroom. This distinction of what objectives a test is designed to measure is particularly important when one considers the intent of the South Carolina Act. Clearly, the South Carolina tests must measure student achievement in terms of specified instructional targets and must assess effectiveness of student achievement relative to these targets.

To enhance the instructional validity of the tests, measurement guidelines based on South Carolina's curriculum were developed and reviewed by committees of teachers, Grades 1-12, from across the State. These measurement guidelines and accompanying instructional ideas are being communicated to local educators in a forthcoming publication.

Therefore, while in appearance a norm-referenced and criterion-referenced test may be similar, the validity of the test for the intended purpose may dictate dissimilar modes of test development. In South Carolina, the setting of minimum standards of performance necessitated that the tests be clearly and defensibly related to instruction in South Carolina schools.

Question: There appears to be a discrepancy between the grade level criterion-referenced testing that is required by the Basic Skills Assessment Program and the concept of continuous progress. How is this discrepancy explained?

Answer: The BSAP testing program is designed to evaluate student achievement on statewide objectives. For Grades 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, and 11, a minimum standard will be set for the subject areas tested. The intent of the legislation, as stated in the Report of the Special Joint Education Committee to Study Minimal Competency in Basic Skills, is "to provide for the early detection of student deficiencies and to insure that our school system gives appropriate instruction to correct any deficiencies

that are detected before they are compounded as a student moves into higher grades". The CTBS/S, the norm-referenced test administered in the Statewide Testing Program which is mandated by the Educational Finance Act of 1977, reports student achievement with respect to a normed group.

Continuous progress programs, which require frequent testing of student progress, along an established continuum, are intended to insure that students receive instruction appropriate to their ability to perform. The Curriculum Development Section supports the continuous progress concept and assists districts, upon request, in implementing such programs. However, neither the BSAP nor the Statewide Testing Program are intended to provide the testing necessary for the successful implementation of continuous progress. The BSAP and the Statewide Testing Program are designed for other purposes and should be valuable to districts in evaluating the results of their instruction.

Question: How can criterion-referenced test data collected in March or April be used to plan an instructional program for a child the following fall?

Answer: If one considers the practical and inescapable realities of the school environment, there exists no perfect meshing of testing and consequential instructional planning. Additionally, the BSAP Act requires that testing take place at the end of Grades 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, and 11. With these considerations in mind, the Department is weighting all factors in

making the decision as to when the schools can receive maximal utility of test information in their planning. At this point testing will take place in May. Because of the late testing, school districts are being urged to explore a variety of alternatives that would facilitate the student's progress toward minimum standards. In other states, school districts have experimented with special summer sessions and early and late school day sessions. Both pose logistical problems but warrant investigation. One solution being explored by the Department is a procedure that would insure that the child's teacher in the fall would receive the spring test results.

Question: When a student is achieving several levels below grade placement, how helpful will the results of a criterion-referenced test given "on grade level" be in planning an instructional program?

Answer: Since the legislation requires testing at the beginning of Grade 1 and at the end of Grades 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, and 11, each teacher should have information on each child from beginning of first grade to the child's present grade level. Additionally, since districts are required to insure continuous assessment of each student's progress in relation to the statewide minimum standards and provide basic instruction to aid in bringing the student's performance up to statewide minimum standards, the student's record folder should contain adequate information to design appropriate instructional programs for the student based upon several years' test data and progress information.

In developing the BSAP tests, readability was a key issue. Quite often a student is capable of performing certain tasks but because of poor reading ability is unable to ascertain what he or she is being asked to do. To insure that the tests' reading levels did not interfere with task performance, the test developers created a word list for each grade and used several different methods to determine the readability of each word, phrase, sentence, and paragraph that a student would be asked to read.

The South Carolina Word List is a unique feature of the proposed assessment program. Copies of the word list at the appropriate grade levels will be distributed to teachers throughout the State. For a word to appear on this list, that word had to appear in every basal reader used in the public school systems; and, as a further restriction, the word had to be definable by at least fifty percent of the students.

The feasibility of developing test items that fit every student's achievement level is out of the realm of practicality; hence, the test items have been developed to provide as much information about each student as possible. Since the tests are designed to provide feedback not only on individual students but also on program effectiveness, the number of students for which information can be gained will increase as the program becomes more effective. Until that time, however, the district must continue to provide prescriptive diagnostic evaluation for those students.

Section 1(f) Beginning in the school year 1981-82 and continuing through the school year 1988-89, administer the test specified in item (e) of this section to all students in grade eleven for the purpose of collecting baseline data. The Department of Education shall use the baseline data for the purpose of program assessment and shall provide assistance to those schools or districts in which the data indicates that program adjustment or modification is most needed due to inordinate numbers of children not passing the test. The State Board of Education shall use the baseline data for the purpose of determining the high school credentials to be awarded students not meeting the minimum achievement scores.

Question: What are the implications of Section 1(f)?

Answer: Section 1(f) states that "The State Board of Education shall use the baseline data for the purpose of determining the high school credentials to be awarded students not meeting the minimum achievement scores".

Originally, the act specified the passage of the Grade 11 test as one of the conditions for receiving a South Carolina High School Diploma. As with any piece of legislation, the BSAP Act went through a series of changes prior to its final adoption. In its final form, those sections of the act related to the awarding of the High School Diploma were removed from the legislation. Apparently, the last sentence of Section 1(f) was overlooked in the editing process. However, since the proviso is in the legislation, the State Board of Education can act upon it if the Board chooses to do so.

Questions Related to Section 2

Question: Address all parts of Section 2 with appropriate suggestions and recommended procedures.

Section 2(a) Participate in the basic skills assessment program established by this act.

Answer: All districts are required by law to participate in the basic skills assessment program.

Section 2(b) Adopt appropriate policies to insure that a continuous assessment is made of an individual student's progress in relation to the statewide minimum standards of student achievement for kindergarten through grade twelve.

Answer: Districts are required to establish policies regarding the continuous assessment of an individual student's progress. Record keeping should be an integral part of the policy procedure. Every teacher involved with the basic skills instruction should be cognizant of measured deficiencies of his/her students and should maintain a procedure of recording student progress with respect to the correction of those deficiencies. At the beginning of the 1980-81 school year, this will apply only to first grade teachers. As the testing program is phased in, teachers at all other levels will be involved. Districts are recommended to either adopt a districtwide procedure or delegate this authority to the principal of each school.

Section 2(c) Prior to the beginning of the 1979-80 school year provide appropriate in-service training for all certified personnel implementing the basic skills assessment program to insure efficient and effective methods of instruction.

Answer: In-service will be necessary to implement adequately the Basic Skills Assessment Program. The legislation states that this in-service shall be provided "Prior to the beginning of the 1979-80 school year...," but implicit in the legislation is a continuing in-service program. (See Page 25 of the Report of the Special Joint Education Committee to Study Minimal Competency in Basic Skills.) The Education Finance Act mandates an on-going in-service program with long and short range plans. These plans should include sessions on the basic skills assessment program. Districts may choose to use all or part of the five days of staff development mandated by the Defined Minimum Program to address basic skills issues. Specialized in-service training for groups of teachers heavily involved in basic skills instruction may also be necessary.

Section(d) Use the results of the tests administered under the basic skills assessment program to help in the diagnosis of student deficiencies.

Answer: The test results must be used to help in the diagnosis of student deficiencies. This implies that principals and teachers should study the results of the BSAP testing and should determine specific weaknesses of all students whose scores are below statewide standards. Part of

the value of a criterion-referenced test is that it is designed to provide some diagnostic information and, thus, fulfills one of the Act's requirements [Sections 1(c) and (1)(d)]. The term diagnosis, however, has caused some query as to its exact meaning. One of Webster's definitions for the word diagnosis is an "investigation or analysis of the cause or the nature of a condition, situation, or problem". In a larger sense, the criterion-referenced tests will provide the classroom teacher with information as to student deficiencies and strengths, relative to the Statewide Objectives for Grades K, 1, 2, 3, 6, and 8.

As a matter of practical importance, a distinction must be made here in the difference associated with diagnosis as related to the readiness test (CSAB) and the end-of-year criterion-referenced tests. Diagnosis here connotes the purpose for which a test score will be interpreted (i.e., developmentally or instructionally). Diagnosis in the context of readiness implies simply that the identification of the areas of developmental weaknesses or lack of prerequisite skills in order for the district to provide additional appropriate developmental activities. The criterion-referenced tests, however, are designed to measure the student's benefit from a year's instruction. That is not to say that the teacher's ability is being measured, but rather, how well the student has "learned" what the teacher has taught is being measured. A student's test scores then should be interpreted by the district as an indication of what additional instruction or new instruction is required.

The diagnostic value of the BSAP tests is a product of how the test items were designed. Built into the incorrect answer choices of the BSAP test items are typical errors made by students in a particular grade. Thus, the student's answer choice will provide some indication of, but not exactly, why he or she has missed the item. For example, consider the test item below:

Directions: Work the problem.
Darken the bubble under your answer.

4 + 2 = _____

2	6	8
○	○	○
(subtracting rather than adding)	(correct)	(incorrectly adding)

If the student's answer is 2, then the teacher knows that a wrong operation, subtracting instead of adding, was performed. This information gives the teacher a starting point in determining the child's actual problem and leads to further investigation of why the child subtracted instead of added.

The value of the criterion-referenced tests will be their use in pinpointing deficiencies and in providing educators with the types of errors made. The criterion-referenced tests will provide an indication that additional diagnostic testing may be necessary. This additional diagnostic testing is to be conducted at the district's discretion [Section 2(d)(e)].

Section 2(e) Provide basic instruction to aid the student in bringing his performance up to the statewide minimum standards for a particular grade when a deficiency is indicated by the results of the tests administered under the basic skills assessment program or other assessment procedures.

Answer: Basic instruction must be provided to students scoring below the statewide standards on the BSAP tests. This implies that classroom instruction will be organized in such a way that all such students are provided specific instruction to correct identified deficiencies. Through individualized, small group, or total group instruction, each student who did not meet the statewide standard must be given specific instruction on every objective in which he/she was deficient. Instruction should be of adequate length to provide a reasonable opportunity for students to correct deficiencies, and materials/resources (beyond the textbook) should be made available to and used by teachers to insure that differing teaching approaches are applied. All basic instruction should be presented by a teacher with appropriate certification credentials.

Section 2(f)(1) Provide in writing test result information to any parent or guardian of a dependent child when the parent or guardian requests such information.

Answer: The test result information must be provided in writing to parents or

guardians upon request. Providing a copy of the printout of the student's performance would serve the purpose of the law; however, a more comprehensive report would include a parent-teacher conference to avoid misinterpretations of the test results. In either case, records of all correspondence and contacts should be maintained.

Section 2(f)(2) Provide test information and explanations of deficiencies to a parent or guardian of a dependent child found to have deficiencies and make suggestions for appropriate assistance to be given to the dependent child by the dependent child's parent or guardian.

Answer: A district must notify the parents or guardian of a child scoring below statewide standards. Providing a copy of the printout of the student's performance, along with explanations of deficiencies and suggestions for parent involvement, could serve the purpose of the law. (Section 7 requires that the notice be in writing and that a copy be filed in the student's scholastic record.) However, a more comprehensive report which includes a parent-teacher conference is recommended to avoid misinterpretations of the test results.

With respect to first grade readiness testing, parents of "not ready" students should also be advised to obtain a physical examination for their children and should be notified of the availability of local governmental health services. The school may wish to request a copy of the results of the physical exam. A

record of all correspondence and contacts should be maintained.

Samples of district readiness letters to parents, as well as district readiness documentation forms, are included in Appendix A.

The State Department of Education has developed an Individual Student Home Report that may be used to supplement the district readiness letter to parents. Additionally, a Class Profile Sheet has been developed to assist teachers in determining the appropriate developmental activities for students in their first grade classes. Appendix B contains a sample letter to parents that could be used with the Individual Student Home Report. Also included in Appendix B are copies of the Individual Student Home Report and the Class Profile Sheet.

Question: What is the full implication for the school under section 2(e)?

Answer: The school district is responsible for providing basic instruction that will facilitate a student's progress in meeting minimum standards. The responsibility for deciding what instruction is necessary for an individual student to meet this achievement standard lies within the district. In planning for instruction, the district is urged to consider the diagnostic value inherent in the student's BSAP scores, results of further discretionary diagnostic testing (carried out by the district), and teacher judgment concerning the needs of the student. While the provision of basic instruction is indeed the responsibility of the

district, Section 1(k) allows the SDE to "render advice and aid to school districts concerning their curricula and the assessment program".

Question: What prerogatives are left to the local districts in terms of testing and the instructional program?

Answer: A most important feature of the South Carolina Basic Skills Act is that some type of assessment is to occur in Grades K-12, hence, the title "An Act to Provide for the Establishment of a Basic Skills Asssessment Program in grades kindergarten through twelve...". Explicit testing requirements are those associated with the statewide testing of a student's readiness during the first weeks of the first grade and the achievement testing at the end of Grades 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, and 11. These testing requirements are the responsibility of the State Department of Education.

Section 2(b) states that school boards through their local school districts will "adopt appropriate policies to insure that a continuous assessment is made of an individual student's progress in relation to the statewide minimum standards of student achievement for kindergarten through grade twelve". Based on Section 2(b), some form of assessment should be planned for and implemented by the district in those grades not tested at the State level. The type of assessment methodology (formal tests, progress records, etc.) to be used is not restricted by any section of the Act.

Essentially, the local school district is free to administer those tests deemed

necessary by the district to complement/ supplement the required BSAP testing. Well within the prerogative of the district is additional diagnostic testing of those first graders who are "not ready" for formal first grade instruction and of those students at various grades levels who do not meet the minimal standards of achievement. The only requirements concerning instructional programs are that they should (1) reflect the adopted statewide educational objectives, (2) include appropriate developmental activities for those students demonstrating deficient area(s) on the readiness test results, and (3) include basic instruction designed "to aid the student in bringing his performance up to the statewide minimum standards for a particular grade when a deficiency is indicated...". There are no restrictions on how instruction will take place in the BSAP.

General Questions

Question: How will the BSAP affect Title I student selection and program implementation?

Answer: The Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery (CSAB) may be used in selecting Title I students for kindergarten and first grade activities; and the CSAB administered at the beginning of first grade may be used in evaluating Title I kindergarten activities. At this time, other comments concerning Title I student selection and program implementation would be inappropriate; but, as more information becomes available, districts will be notified of this new information.

Question: Is there an index which lists the materials developed by SDE for the Basic Skills Act implementation (i.e., PALS)?

Answer: Materials developed by the State Department of Education for the Basic Skills Assessment Program are listed on the following pages. Presently, most of these materials are concerned with first grade readiness; however, some publications are currently being developed that will address the end-of-year Basic Skills Assessment Program tests and test results.

RESOURCE MATERIALS

Videotapes

1. Ready, Set, Go: Training for Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery.*

   This is a video-cassette tape that offers recommended administration and scoring procedures for the first grade readiness test.

2. "Let's Get Started: First Grade Readiness Activities".*

   This is a video-cassette tape of a first grade teacher's classroom management techniques that insures appropriate attention to student deficiencies. The tape also includes segments showing students engaged in developmental activities, each of which addresses a specifically identified readiness skill.

*For the availability of ITV tapes, consult ITV and Radio Staff Development Resources and Schedules for the current year or contact the appropriate consultant in the Curriculum Section of the State Department of Education.

Current Publications

1. Learning Through Play: A Guide for Parents of 3-, 4-, or 5-Year Olds, South Carolina Department of Education, 1980.

   This publication contains developmental activities keyed to the 18 State Kindergarten Objectives. The activities were designed specifically for the parents of 3-, 4-, or 5-year olds and can easily be done at home.

Current Publications (continued)

2. Ready or Not: A Report on the 1979 Statewide Readiness Test Administration and Results, Educational Assessment Section, Office of Research, South Carolina Department of Education, October, 1980.

   This publication presents the interpretive information along with the first year results of the 1979 Statewide Readiness Test Administration. Information on instructional implications and local reactions to the first year administration are also included.

3. Report on the Implementation of the Basic Skills Assessment Program, 1978-79, South Carolina Department of Education, December, 1979.

   This publication is a report to the legislature on the progress the Department is making in its effort to comply with the Basic Skills Assessment Program Legislation.

4. State Objectives, Reading, Writing, and Mathematics, Grades K-12, South Carolina Department of Education, September, 1979.

   This publication contains a listing of the 18 kindergarten objectives with their accompanying explanations and the 16 Basic Skills Objectives for Reading, Writing, and Mathematics with their accompanying measurement strategies.

5. South Carolina Word List, prepared by Instructional Objectives Exchange for the South Carolina Department of Education, November, 1980.

   This publication contains a by-grade-level listing of words used in developing the Basic Skills Assessment Program Tests in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics.

Current Publications (continued)

6. The Rainbow Book for First Grade, Curriculum Development Section, Office of General Education, South Carolina Department of Education, 1980.

   This publication contains developmental activities based on the 18 State Kindergarten Objectives. The activities were written specifically for first grade teachers to use with first graders in bringing them into the formal curriculum as learning and maturity dictate.

Forthcoming Publications

1. A report to the legislature on the 1979-80 implementation of the Basic Skills Assessment Program.

2. A book of activities keyed to the 18 State Kindergarten Objectives for use by kindergarten teachers.

3. A guide for teachers on the relationship between the test development process and instruction, including how the test items were developed for the Basic Skills Assessment Program, sample test items, and instructional considerations.

APPENDIX A

SAMPLES OF DISTRICT READINESS DOCUMENTATION

Aiken County School District's
Letter to Parents

Dear Parents:

Your first grade child has been tested to determine his readiness for first grade work and the results are reported at the bottom of this letter. In conducting this test, the school district has complied with the Basic Skills Assessment Act (Act 631) which was passed by your State Legislature in 1978. This act also requires each school district to advise the parents of any child who did not attain a readiness for first grade to secure for that child a complete physical examination. This examination should ensure that your child's learning capacity is not impaired by some physical problem such as sight, hearing, etc.. You may take your child to your own private physician, the Aiken County Health Department, or the Aiken County Department of Social Services for Medicaid Services.

Attached to this letter you will find a list of basic skills objectives that were measured by the Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery. Below the objectives are the explanations and examples of activities which you can use to assist your child's development within the areas of concern. We are sending the objectives and explanations to all parents. A red check mark is placed beside any objectives on which your child did not meet readiness standards as determined by the South Carolina State Department of Education. You will then be able to help your child strengthen any areas in which he may need help. You should also contact your child's teacher for other appropriate assistance.

_____
Principal

Name of Child_____
School_____
Teacher_____
Date_____
Attained overall readiness_____
Did not attain overall readiness_____

1. THE STUDENT PERFORMS TASKS INVOLVING GROSS MOTOR SKILLS. ( )

   Explanation: The child uses large muscles so that eyes, hands, and feet work together and body is balanced while doing physical activities.

   Example of activities: marching, jumping, hopping, skipping, and galloping.

---

2. THE STUDENT PERFORMS TASKS INVOLVING FINE MOTOR SKILLS. ( )

   Explanation: The child's small muscles work together using eyes and hand movements and body positions to use objects.

   Example of activities: buttoning, zipping, lacing, folding paper, and cutting.

---

3. THE STUDENT REMEMBERS VISUAL STIMULI. ( )

   Explanation: The child remembers after a short period of time, things he sees. The short period of time will depend upon the things given the child to do.

   Example of activities: remembering shapes, colors, numbers, and patterns.

---

4. KNOWS LIKENESSES AND DIFFERENCES. ( )

   Explanation: The child knows when things he sees are alike or different.

   Example of activities: matching colors; sorting objects on the basis of color; matching pictures; matching shapes; and matching symbols (numerals, letters, words).

---

5. THE STUDENT REMEMBERS AUDITORY STIMULI. ( )

   Explanation: After a short period, the child remembers items spoken or told. This short period will depend upon the activity.

   Example of activities: repeating sounds made by animals, objects, people, fingerplays, poems, and songs.

---

6. DETERMINES LIKENESSES AND DIFFERENCES IN AUDITORY STIMULI. ( )

   Explanation: The child can tell the difference between sounds.

   Example of activities: matching sounds made by objects, animals, or people and matching sounds according to rhythmic pattern, pitch (high-low), or volume (loud-soft).

---

7. COMMUNICATES WITH OTHERS BY USING EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE. ( )

   Explanation: The child talks with others by using simple words and by expressing ideas with words.

   Example of activities: including naming such things as colors, parts of the body, seasons, letters, and numerals to develop vocabulary orally.

---

8. BEING RECEPTIVE OF LANGUAGE IN COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS. ( )

   Explanation: The child communicates with others by listening attentively and by using the information presented.

   Example of activities: listening and responding to the conversation of others, listening to and making comments about selection read, and listening to and following directions.

---

9. THE STUDENT EXPRESSES AN INTEREST IN LANGUAGE. ( )

Explanation: The child asks questions or begins activities to learn more about words in books.

Example of activities: asking the meaning of words, asking to have a story read, looking at pictures in books, and sharing books with the class.

---

10. CLASSIFIES STIMULI ON THE BASIS OF ONE OR MORE ATTRIBUTE(S). ( )

Explanation: The child can see why objects are alike or different and put them together in groups.

Example of activities: classifying objects according to color, size, and shape and classifying by functions and/or relationships such things as objects, foods, animals, or people.

---

11. COMPARES STIMULI ON THE BASIS OF ONE OR MORE ATTRIBUTE(S). ( )

Explanation: The child must be able to compare and recognize likenesses and differences in objects.

Example of activities: comparing two groups of objects using the terms more than, less than, or same as and comparing two objects according to length, weight, size, shape, or distance.

---

12. SEQUENCES STIMULI ON THE BASIS OF ONE OR MORE ATTRIBUTE(S). ( )

Explanation: The child must be able to put in order and recognize differences in objects.

Example of activities: counting up to 10 objects; identifying the correct object to complete the pattern; arranging in correct order three pictures; and putting in order objects according to length, height, weight, or size.

13. BEGINS TO UNDERSTAND THE CONCEPT OF CONSERVATION OF NUMBER. ( )

Explanation: The child can see a group has the same number of objects no matter how you place the objects.

Example of activities: presenting the student with 5 or 10 objects and asking the student to count the objects. After the student counts the number correctly, rearranging the objects and asking "How many objects are there?".

---

14. INTERPRETS AND INFERS ON THE BASIS OF ORAL OR ILLUSTRATIVE SELECTIONS. ( )

Explanation: The child understands picture stories and stories read to him and can talk about what is happening and may happen.

Example of activities: listening to a selection, expressing the main idea, and supplying a logical ending to a story after being presented with only two-thirds of the story.

---

15. CONTROLS EMOTIONS AND EXPRESSES THEM IN A SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE MANNER. ( )

Explanation: The child controls himself with accepted words or actions.

Example of activities: expressing feelings or needs in a controlled and constructive manner, adjusting to changes in routine, and accepting socially imposed limits.

---

16. DISPLAYS A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD SCHOOL. ( )

Explanation: The child feels good about himself and shows it.

Example of activities: taking finished work home, showing work to others, completing tasks, tidying up after self, and asking to have work displayed.

---

17. DISPLAYS A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD SCHOOL. ( )

Explanation: The child feels good about school and shows it.

Example of activities: using materials correctly and participating voluntarily in a wide variety of classroom activities.

---

18. INTERACTS WITH OTHERS IN SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE MANNER. ( )

Explanation: The child gets along well with his classmates and is thoughtful and helpful of others.

Example of activities: sharing materials, listening to ideas and opinions, respecting the property of others, and reacting positively toward the achievements of others.

Clarendon School District 2's
Letter to Parents

Date_____

To: _____
Parent or Guardian

From _____
Teacher

Re: _____
Student

This year each first grade student in South Carolina was given a test to determine the student's readiness for first grade work. Your child's score on the test was below the minimum cut-off score of 88 set by the state. This indicates that your child may have difficulty doing first grade work.

We are required to advise you to secure a complete physical examination for your child. This will determine whether any physical problems such as poor vision or hearing are causing this difficulty. If you are eligible for Medicaid, you may be able to receive assistance in this matter from the Clarendon County Department of Social Services (phone 435-8138).

We must explain what these test results mean and what you can do to help your child at home. Please come to the school to meet with your child's teacher on_____ at _____o'clock.

Please check the appropriate blank.

() I will attend this meeting.
() I will be unable to attend, but will call Mr._____ or Mrs. _____at_____.

Please sign this form so that we know that you are aware of this meeting. Return it to your child's school as soon as possible.

_____ _____
Date Signature of Parent or Guardian

Clarendon School District 2's
Report on Parent Conference

Name of Child_____

Date_____School_____

Purpose: To discuss results of readiness testing.

Test Results

Score:

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Recommendations for remediation:

School:

Home:

_____
Signature of Teacher

_____
Signature of Parent

Clarendon School District 2's
Follow-up Letter to Parents

Date_____

To the parents of_____
Student's Name

We are sorry you were not able to be present at the conference held on _____(date) to discuss the results of your child's readiness test. We hope that by now you have had a physical examination for your child.

Because the basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics are so necessary for your child's success in school, we ask that you join us in helping your child at home. You can help by following these recommendations:

1. Set aside a regular time each day for school work.
2. Provide a quiet place and your undivided attention.
3. Review any papers sent home and go over homework assignments.
4. Read to your child from books appropriate to the child's interests.
5. Obtain a public library card and allow your child to check out books often.
6. Contact your child's teacher for other suggestions.
7. Give praise often even for small successes.
8. See that school attendance is regular and that only illness prevents attendance.
9. Let your child know that you consider his/her education to be of great importance.

These recommendations are ways that you can help your child have a successful school experience. We will be happy to discuss these with you at anytime. Please call the school (ph.#_____) to set up a convenient time.

_____
Teacher's Signature

Oconee County School District's
Letter to Parents

Dear Mr. & Mrs._____

In accordance with a new state law we have just completed giving_____, along with all other first graders in our county, a readiness test. This test, the Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery, was adopted as the state readiness test last spring. The state legislature required the State Board of Education to select a test and a cut-off score to determine readiness for first grade. The term readiness is used to identify those basic skills needed to begin first grade.

_____scored below the readiness level on this test and will be provided additional assistance in the coming weeks in the areas indicated on the test. Let me assure you that your child's score does not mean that he/she will not pass first grade. It does indicate that at the present time _____ is not performing where he/she needs to be. We will provide an enriched readiness program for your child and would like to work closely with you on your child's progress this year. Please contact _____ teacher for a conference as soon as it is convenient.

The state legislature requires this letter of communication and further suggest that you take your child to your family doctor for a complete physical exam. This will provide you with knowledge of any physical problems that might be present, and it will assist us in helping your child at the school level. The Oconee Health Department is available for those families needing assistance in securing a physical exam.

If I can be of any further assistance, please give me a call.

Sincerely,

Principal

Richland District 2's
Student File Documentation

CSAB RESULTS

STUDENT NAME_____ DATE_____

HOMEROOM TEACHER_____ READINESS SCORE:_____

PARENTS NOTIFIED BY MAIL_____ (Date) READINESS STATUS:_____

DATE OF CONFERENCE_____ PARENT(S) IN ATTENDANCE_____

DEFICIENCIES - SEE RED CIRCLES ON ATTACHED TEST

KEY: *Further Diagnosis Needed.
**Additional Developmental Activities Needed.
Students will be instructed with activities developed by professionals in Richland District 2.

____Obj. 1 Gross Motor Skills Activities
____Obj. 2 Fine Motor Skill Activities
____Obj. 3 Visual Stimuli Activities
____Obj. 4 Determining likenesses and differences in visual stimuli activities
____Obj. 5 Remembers Auditory Stimuli Activities
____Obj. 6 Determines likenesses and differences in auditory stimuli activities
____Obj. 7 Expressive Language Activities
____Obj. 8 Communication Activities
____Obj. 9 Expressive Language Activities
____Obj. 10 Classification Activities
____Obj. 11 Comparison Activities
____Obj. 12 Sequencing Activities
____Obj. 13 Conservation of Number Activities
____Obj. 14 Interpreting and Inferring Activities
____Obj. 15 Controlling and Expressing Emotions Activities
____Obj. 16 Positive Self Attitude Activities
____Obj. 17 Positive School Attitude Activities
____Obj. 18 Social Interaction Activities

Developed by Amy Donnelly

APPENDIX B

STATE DEPARTMENT SAMPLE LETTER AND CSAB SCORE REPORTS

Dear _____:

_____, along with all other first grade students in South Carolina, has taken a readiness test as required by a recent State law. The readiness test, the Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery, has been administered statewide for the past two years. The State law required that the State Department of Education select a test and establish a cut-off score to determine the child's readiness for the formal first grade curriculum. The law also requires that additional developmental activities be provided to all students who do not obtain the readiness cut-off score.

_____ scored below the readiness cut-off score on the readiness test and will, therefore, be provided an enriched program in areas in which the test indicated weaknesses. Let us assure you that your child's score does not mean that _____ will not pass first grade. It does mean that at the present time your child is not performing where _____ needs to be performing.

Specific areas of weaknesses are flagged by two asterisks on the enclosed Individual Student Home Report. These asterisks indicate that your child will need assistance in these basic skills.

In addition to the assistance that we will be providing your child, we would like to work closely with you on your child's progress this year. We would like to meet with you to discuss your child's test results and what you can do to help your child at home. Please telephone the school at _____ to arrange a meeting with your child's teacher to discuss _____'s needs.

The State law also requires that we recommend that you take your child to your family doctor for a complete physical exam. The _____ Health Department is also available for those families needing assistance in securing a physical exam. The physical exam will provide you with knowledge of any physical problems that might be present and could assist us in helping your child at the school level.

When you do acquire the physical exam, would you please have your doctor or the Health Department send the school a copy of the examination results.

Your assistance in helping your child attain readiness in all basic skills is an important step in your child's education.

Sincerely,

_____
Principal

Enclosure

INDIVIDUAL STUDENT HOME REPORT

South Carolina Department of Education
Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery

Student Name:
Teacher Name:

District:
School:

The Basic Skills Assessment Program Legislation requires the administration of a readiness test to all public school students at the beginning of first grade. The readiness test is designed to measure a student's readiness to begin the formal first grade curriculum. The end-of-kindergarten objectives that can be measured by a test were used to select the readiness test. The test that was selected measures the degree to which each child has developed the concepts and skills contained in these kindergarten objectives. The results of the readiness test will be used to provide appropriate developmental activities in the first grade to those students who need additional activities.

In the box provided below is your child's Readiness Score and Readiness Status. The maximum Readiness Score possible is 117.

Readiness Score:
Readiness Status:

Your child's performance on the readiness test indicates that he/she needs additional developmental activities for those kindergarten objectives that are asterisked (**) below. Please contact your child's teacher to discuss your child's strengths and weaknesses on the test.

KINDERGARTEN OBJECTIVES MEASURED BY READINESS TEST

OBJECTIVE 1: The student performs tasks involving gross motor skills.

Explanation: The student uses large muscles to coordinate eye-hand movements, eye-foot movements, and body positions in maintaining balance while performing physical activities. Demonstrations of large muscle control include activities such as marching, hopping on either foot, skipping, jumping and landing on both feet galloping, climbing stairs while alternating feet, and throwing, throwing, catching, and kicking a ball.

OBJECTIVE 2: The student performs tasks involving fine motor skills.

Explanation: The student uses small muscles to coordinate eye-hand movements and body positions while manipulating objects. Tracing, copying, drawing, and painting. Demonstrations of eye-hand coordination include activities such as buttoning, zipping, lacing, and tying articles of clothing; holding paper; assembling puzzles; opening a book and turning the pages one at a time from front to back; building with blocks and construction toys; cutting straight and curved lines while holding scissors properly; tracing objects and symbols, for example, finger tracing in sand or tracing wooden letters and numerals; and copying shapes, letters, own name, words, and numerals.

OBJECTIVE 3: The student remembers visual stimuli.

Explanation: The student recalls, after a brief lapse of time, stimuli presented visually. (The "brief lapse of time" will vary depending upon the activity.) Demonstration of visual memory involves the student's recalling by pointing to or naming one to six visual stimuli after the stimuli have been presented and removed or covered. Visual stimuli might include colors, shapes, numerals, letters, or patterns.

OBJECTIVE 4: The student determines likenesses and differences in visual stimuli.

Explanation: The student distinguishes likenesses and differences by comparing visual stimuli. Demonstrations of visual discrimination include activities such as matching identical colors, sorting objects on the basis of color, matching identical pictures, selecting the picture that is different, matching identical shapes, sorting objects on the basis of shape, assembling simple puzzles, matching objects of identical sizes, sorting objects on the basis of size, and matching identical symbols (numerals, letters, and words).

OBJECTIVE 5: The student remembers auditory stimuli.

Explanation: The student recalls, after a brief lapse of time, stimuli presented auditorily. (The "brief lapse of time" will vary depending upon the activity.) Stimuli might include sounds made by animals, people, or objects and sound patterns. Demonstrations of auditory memory include activities such as repeating sounds made by animals, objects, and people; repeating rhythmic sequences; counting from 1 to 10 by rote; and repeating nursery rhymes, fingerplays, poems, and songs.

OBJECTIVE 6: The student determines likenesses and differences in auditory stimuli.

Explanation: The student distinguishes likenesses and differences by comparing sounds. Demonstrations of auditory discrimination include activities such as matching sounds made by objects, animals, or people; matching sounds actu-ding to rhythmic pattern, pitch (high-low), or volume (loud-soft); recognizing words that sound the same (for example, "dog" and "dog") and words that sound different (for example, "dog" and "doll"); matching words that rhyme (for example, "cat," "hat," and "mat"); and matching sounds at the beginning of words (for example, "boy," "ball," and "bear").

OBJECTIVE 7: The student communicates with others by using expressive language.

Explanation: The student communicates with others by using a simple oral vocabulary and by expressing ideas with an expanding oral vocabulary. Vocabulary development may include naming such things as colors; parts of the body; people; animals; foods; objects; sounds; days of the week; seasons; occupations; letters; numerals; coins; and textures. Demonstrations of expression of ideas include activities such as initiating verbal communication with others; relating personal experiences to classroom activities; and dictating personal experiences for teacher's recording on a written form.

OBJECTIVE 8: The student is receptive of language in communicating with others.

Explanation: The student communicates with others by listening attentively and by initiating the information presented. Demonstrations of receptive language include activities such as listening and responding to the conversations of others, listening to and making comments about a selection read, and listening to and following directions.

OBJECTIVE 10: The student classifies stimuli on the basis of one or more attribute(s).

Explanation: In order to be able to classify, the student must first recognize similarities in stimuli (such as objects) with respect to some attribute or characteristic (such as size). The student must then group the stimuli according to one or more attribute(s). Demonstrations of classification include activities such as classifying objects according to color, size, or shape and classifying by fun chores and/or relationships such things as objects, foods, animals, or people.

OBJECTIVE 11: The student compares stimuli on the basis of one or more attribute(s).

Explanation: In order to be able to compare, the student must first recognize similarities and differences in stimuli (such as objects) with respect to some attribute or characteristic (such as size). The student must then compare the stimuli according to one or more attribute(s). Demonstrations of comparison include activities such as comparing two groups of objects using the terms more than, less than, or same as; comparing two objects according to length, height, weight, size, shape, or distance; comparing opposites or positions (for example, behind/in front of, between/beside, above/below).

OBJECTIVE 12: The student sequences stimuli on the basis of one or more attribute(s).

Explanation: In order to be able to sequence, the student must first recognize differences in stimuli (such as objects) with respect to some attribute or characteristic (such as size). The student must then order the stimuli according to one or more attribute(s). Demonstrations of sequencing include activities such as counting up to ten objects, ordering objects according to length, height, weight or size, identifying the correct object to complete the pattern, completing an incomplete pattern or picture, retelling a short story in sequential order, arranging in correct order three pictures, and stating the sequential steps involved after completing a three-step activity.

OBJECTIVE 14: The student interprets and infers on the basis of oral or illustrative selections.

Explanation: The student demonstrates understanding of selections for example, stories presented orally or in picture form, by interpreting or making inferences on the basis of the selection. The student interprets selections by summarizing what has been seen or heard. This student makes inferences by going beyond the content of the selection. Demonstrations of interpretation and inference include activities such as listening to a selection, expressing the main idea, and making inferences, supplying a logical ending to a story after being presented with only two-thirds of the story, supplying appropriate answer(s) to questions on the basis of context clues, and making up a story about a picture.

** Additional Developmental Activities Needed

NOTE: Only the kindergarten objectives that were measured by the readiness test are listed on this report.

TEACHER:

I.D.:

CLASS PROFILE SHEET

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
COGNITIVE SKILLS ASSESSMENT BATTERY

DISTRICT:

SCHOOL:

PAGE OF

CLASS SUMMARY DATA

STATISTIC	SCORE	STATUS	NUMBER	PERCENT
MEAN		READY		
MEDIAN		NOT READY		
LOWEST SCORE		INCOMPLETE		
HIGHEST SCORE		(NOT READY)		

STUDENT NAME	I.D.	READINESS SCORE	MAXIMUM SCORE PER OBJ. →	Obj 1 Gross Motor Skills	Obj 2 Fine Motor Skills	Obj 3 Visual Memory	Obj 4 Visual Discrimination	Obj 5 Auditory Memory	Obj 6 Auditory Discrimination	Obj 7 Expressive Language	Obj 8 Receptive Language	Obj 9 Interest in Language	Obj 10 Classifying	Obj 11 Comparison	Obj 12 Sequencing	Obj 13 Conservation of Numbers	Obj 14 Interpreting and Inferring	Obj 15 Emotional Control	Obj 16 Positive Self Attitude	Obj 17 Positive School Attitude	Obj 18 Social Interaction
			NO. OF ITEMS PER OBJ. →	3	7	1	18	5	9	23	17	0	4	2	10	0	9	0	0	0	0
			6	9	6	18	10	9	40	19	T.O.	4	2	16	T.O.	13	T.O.	T.O.	T.O.	T.O.	T.O.

*FURTHER DIAGNOSIS NEEDED

**ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES NEEDED

T.O. = MEASURABLE BY TEACHER OBSERVATION ONLY